



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

MAY 17 2005

MAY - 9 2005

Dear Mr. Faleomavaega:

Thank you for your March 23 letter to the President regarding your concerns about the proposed sale of F-16 fighter aircraft to Pakistan. The White House asked the Department of State to reply to your inquiry on the President's behalf.

On March 25, the Administration announced a number of steps we are taking to broaden our strategic relationships in South Asia, a region of vital and growing importance to the United States. These steps include the Administration's intent to move forward with the sale of F-16's to Pakistan, a critical ally in the war on terror. The F-16 sale will meet Pakistan's legitimate defense needs and make Pakistan more secure – which in turn will make it easier for Pakistan to cultivate peaceful relationships with all its neighbors, including India.

The 9/11 Commission recommended that the United States “make the long-term commitment to the future of Pakistan... so long as Pakistan's leaders remain willing to make difficult choices of their own,” a recommendation now echoed in the Intelligence Reform Act of 2004. President Musharraf and his government are making these tough choices every day, literally putting their lives on the line in doing so. Pakistan has sent thousands of troops into its tribal areas along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border to conduct military operations against Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and their terrorist allies. The Pakistani Government has arrested key Al-Qaeda figures, including 9/11 mastermind Khaled Sheikh Mohammad. Over the past year, Pakistan has dramatically improved its relations with both Afghanistan and India. Finally, Pakistan is striking at the conditions terrorists seek to take advantage of – such as poverty, ignorance, and hopelessness – by significantly increasing its expenditures on education and health care. The new steps we are taking with Pakistan recognize Pakistan's commitment to transforming itself into a moderate, prosperous, democratic state, and leading voice of moderation in the Islamic world.

The Honorable

Eni Faleomavaega,

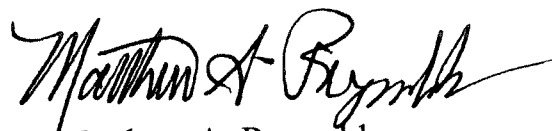
House of Representatives.

Our developing relationship with Pakistan will not come at the expense of our relations with India. Building on the base created by the Next Steps in the Strategic Partnership (NSSP), the Administration has decided to broaden and raise to a new level the U.S. strategic partnership with India. We are accelerating implementation of the NSSP; launching an energy dialogue that will be led on our side by Energy Secretary Bodman; revitalizing the U.S.-India Economic Dialogue; increasing our civilian space cooperation; and intensifying defense cooperation, including a positive U.S. response to India's Request for Information on its bid to purchase a next generation of Multi-Role Combat Aircraft. We have also extended an invitation to Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to visit the U.S. and meet with President Bush in July. The new steps we are taking with India recognize the country's emergence as a global power, our shared democratic traditions, and rapidly increasing U.S.-India commercial ties resulting from India's transformation into a leading market economy.

We believe that our efforts to broaden our strategic relationships with both Pakistan and India advance U.S. national interests and promote peace, stability, and security in South Asia.

Thank you again for your interest in this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Matthew A. Reynolds". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Matthew" being the most prominent part.

Matthew A. Reynolds
Acting Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs